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Command and Staff College  
Marine Corps University  
2076 South Street  
Marine Corps Combat Development Command  
Quantico, Virginia 22134-5068*

# ***MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES***

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**GENERAL FRANCIS MARION:  
THE SWAMP FOX AND MARINE CORPS WARFIGHTING DOCTRINE**

**SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**Title:** General Francis Marion: The Swamp Fox and Marine Corps Warfighting Doctrine

**Author:** Major Daniel Hunter Wilson, U.S. Marine Corps

**Thesis:** This treatise provides historical relevance to current Marine Corps doctrinal concepts by examining the warfighting methods of General Francis Marion during the Revolutionary War.

**Discussion:** In the late 1980s, the Marine Corps officially adopted *maneuver warfare* theory as its institutional doctrinal philosophy. This new way of thinking about waging war was captured in the capstone doctrinal publication Fleet Marine Field Manual One (FMFM 1). Historically, the Marine Corps has pursued a style of warfare more akin to attrition than to maneuver. One of the main reasons the Marine Corps adopted maneuver warfare, as a warfighting philosophy, was in recognition that on future battlefields it may be fighting outnumbered. This is particularly true of the Marine Corps' forward deployed forces that are normally the first to arrive on scene in an emerging crisis. By using maneuver warfare as its warfighting doctrine, the Marine Corps is able to generate more combat power with fewer Marines. To further bolster the doctrinal shift, the Marine Corps has developed a "capabilities-based" force, resident in the various Marine Air-Ground Task Forces (MAGTFs).

Brigadier General Francis Marion, a celebrated Revolutionary War hero from South Carolina, was one of the first European American practitioners of maneuver warfare. While his warfighting doctrine was never written down in a slick publication, it can be readily deduced through a careful study of the historical records describing his methods of waging war against the British regular and Loyalist forces. Was he just another successful commander, or was he an early practitioner of the warfighting doctrine that the Marine Corps has officially embraced? By studying the effectiveness of Marion's methods through the filter of current Marine Corps doctrinal concepts, this paper contributes to the discussion of maneuver warfare as a viable warfighting doctrine.

**Conclusions:** In the way he conducted war, General Marion epitomized the essence of current Marine Corps warfighting concepts. He thought about waging war in the same manner that contemporary Marine Corps officers are taught to think about waging war. Officers in the Marine Corps and General Marion share an enduring mindset that seeks to exploit enemy weaknesses with friendly strengths; a way of thinking that treats the enemy system as a whole and seeks to shatter the cohesion of that system. General Marion practiced maneuver warfare in its purest form in the Revolutionary War. Today's Marine officers think with like mind. Marine officers seek first to know their enemy and his capabilities, and then plan for ways to attack his critical vulnerabilities with our center of gravity, or strength. This way of thinking remains valid across the entire spectrum of conflict, most recently validated in the Gulf War. While new technologies and tactics have changed the character of warfare over the past two centuries, the fundamental nature of war has remained the same. General Marion's way of thinking about waging war is as valid today as it was during the Revolutionary War. General Marion clearly demonstrated that the concepts of maneuver warfare that form the basis of the Marine Corps' current warfighting doctrine are timeless.

## Chapter 1

### The Swamp Fox and Marine Corps Warfighting Doctrine

*The thoughts contained here are not merely guidance for action in combat but a way of thinking.*  
General C.C. Krulak, USMC<sup>1</sup>

In the late 1980s, the Marine Corps officially adopted *maneuver warfare* theory as its institutional doctrinal philosophy. This new way of thinking about waging war was captured in the capstone doctrinal publication Fleet Marine Field Manual One (FMFM 1). FMFM 1 was later revised and republished as Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication One (MCDP 1). The higher conceptual doctrine contained in MCDP 1 provides all Marines with a common way of thinking about warfare. While MCDP 1 is authoritative, it is not a prescriptive document, but is descriptive in nature. Simply put, MCDP 1 does not contain magic solutions to every imaginable warfighting problem; rather, it provides Marines with broad guidance on how to think about waging war. The conduct of warfare ranges on a spectrum from *maneuver warfare* on the one end to *attrition warfare* on the other end.

#### *The Warfare Spectrum*

*Attrition* warfare pursues victory through the cumulative destruction of the enemy's material assets by superior firepower. It is a direct approach to the conduct of war that sees war

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## Preface

I have been interested in Francis Marion, the Swamp Fox of the Revolution, ever since reading of his exploits as a young boy. I was living in Africa at the time, the son of missionaries, and when I was roaming the Namibian veldt with my Bushman buddy hunting for small game, I would pretend to be the Swamp Fox. In many places along the Okavango River, which separates Angola from Namibia, the terrain is strikingly similar to the description of General Marion's hideout in the South Carolina swamps. We would build little forts on the swampy banks of the river. There we would retreat and eat the fish we had caught or small game we had killed, all the while pretending to fight our imaginary foes.

*The Patriot*, a recent movie starring Mel Gibson as the Swamp Fox, rekindled my youthful interest in Francis Marion and the American Revolution. I thought it would be interesting to compare the Marine Corps' warfighting philosophy, as described in Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication One (MCDP 1), *Warfighting*, with Francis Marion's style of warfare against the British and Loyalists in the American Revolutionary War.

I would like to thank my doctoral mentors, Dr. Frank Clark and Dr. John "Blackjack" Matthews, for their patient guidance and superb advice. One of my favorite quotes is from Dr. Matthews: "Pragmatism is the bridge between idealism and realism." My faculty advisor, Lieutenant Colonel Tom Bright ("Get Some!"), was instrumental in keeping me on track and providing valuable tips for improving the final product. My Father, the Reverend Talmage Wilson, reviewed the various drafts of this paper and provided me with excellent feedback. He taught me the secret of education at an early age—an inside joke only he will understand. I am

deeply indebted to Ms. Strong, chief archivist of the Marine Corps Research Center for her time and efforts in helping me understand how to construct a good outline and find primary source material. Finally, I would like to thank Ms. Clark, a librarian at the Marine Corps Research Center, who was of tremendous assistance in obtaining research materials.

as a straightforward test of strength and a matter principally of force ratios. The focus is on the efficient application of fires, leading to a highly proceduralized approach to war. The logical conclusion of attrition warfare is the eventual physical destruction of the enemy's entire arsenal, although the expectation is that the enemy will surrender or disengage before this happens out of unwillingness to bear the rising cost. Success depends on an overall superiority in attritional capacity—that is, the ability to inflict and absorb attrition. The greatest necessity for success is numerical and material superiority.<sup>2</sup> The horrific slaughter of the battles on the western front, during World War I, is a classic example of attrition warfare.

On the opposite side of the spectrum is warfare by *maneuver*, which stems from a desire to circumvent a problem and attack it from a position of advantage rather than meet it straight on. Instead of pursuing the cumulative destruction of every component in the enemy arsenal, the goal is to attack the enemy *system*—to incapacitate the enemy *systematically*. Instead of attacking enemy strength, the goal is the application of our strength against selected enemy weakness in order to maximize advantage. Success depends not so much on the efficient performance of procedures and techniques, but on understanding the specific characteristics of the enemy system.<sup>3</sup> General Jackson's flank march during the Battle of Chancellorsville, Virginia, in 1863 typifies the art of maneuver warfare. He rapidly moved his corps into an advantageous position from which to attack General Howard's corps. From this position, General Jackson shattered the cohesion of his stunned enemy and quickly rolled up the Union flank.

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<sup>1</sup> Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication 1, *Warfighting* (Washington, DC: U.S. Marine Corps, 20 June 1997), Foreword. Cited hereafter as MCDP 1.

<sup>2</sup> MCDP 1, 36,37.

<sup>3</sup> MCDP 1, 37,38.

Attrition and maneuver warfare do not exist in their theoretically pure form. All warfare involves both maneuver and attrition in some mix. In fact, firepower and attrition are essential elements of warfare by maneuver. However, the object of attrition in maneuver warfare is not merely to contribute to the incremental wearing down of the entire force, but to eliminate a key element, which incapacitates the enemy systematically.<sup>4</sup> In the Gulf War, the Republican Guard divisions were identified as the strategic reserves for the Iraqi Army. They were targeted for destruction during the air campaign to enable the coalition forces to freely maneuver, without the looming threat that they posed. Consequently, the Republican Guard divisions were attrited to the point where they were combat ineffective and unable to prevent the coalition ground forces from maneuvering on the battlefield. In this instance, attrition was successful in enabling subsequent maneuver.

Historically, the Marine Corps has pursued a style of warfare more akin to attrition than to maneuver. One of the main reasons the Marine Corps adopted maneuver warfare, as a warfighting philosophy, was in recognition that on future battlefields it may be fighting outnumbered. This is particularly true of the Marine Corps' forward deployed forces that are normally the first to arrive on scene in an emerging crisis. By using maneuver warfare as its warfighting doctrine, the Marine Corps is able to generate more combat power with fewer Marines. To further bolster the doctrinal shift, the Marine Corps has developed a "capabilities-based" force, resident in the various Marine Air-Ground Task Forces (MAGTFs).

Furthermore, the breakup of the former Soviet Union in the early 1990s has led to an increasingly uncertain international environment in which maneuver warfare, a more flexible doctrine in application, is more relevant than attrition warfare. Maneuver warfare doctrine is readily adaptable across the range of conflicts in which the Marine Corps may find itself and

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<sup>4</sup> MCDP 1, 38,39.

more suitable to an expeditionary force like the Marine Corps. Additionally, maneuver warfare's decentralized approach to accomplishing missions, increases the speed at which an organization can adapt to changing situations. Moreover, maneuver warfare as compared to attrition warfare is a more intelligent way of engaging an opposing force by focusing on the destruction of the enemy system as a whole, instead of attempting to destroy the enemy through superior attritional capacity. While attrition warfare is aimed at the numerical and material composition of the enemy's physical forces, maneuver warfare is aimed at the mind of the enemy leadership.

### ***Enter the Swamp Fox***

Brigadier General Francis Marion, a celebrated Revolutionary War hero from South Carolina, was one of the first European American practitioners of maneuver warfare. While his warfighting doctrine was never written down in a slick publication like MCDP 1, it can be readily deduced through a careful study of the historical records describing his methods of waging war against the British regular and Loyalist<sup>5</sup> forces. Much like today's Marines, American military leaders (especially in the southern states) were forced to wage a war with minimal resources.<sup>6</sup> Francis Marion was one of those military commanders who fought on in spite of severe logistical and personnel shortcomings, making a noteworthy contribution to the defeat of the British-led forces in South Carolina. Only a handful of other commanders matched his record of tactical success in the Revolutionary War.

### ***Maneuver Warfare Prophet?***

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<sup>5</sup> Loyalist forces in the Revolutionary War were militias comprised of civilian men living in the various states who remained loyal to the British crown. Also referred to as Tories.

<sup>6</sup> John M. Dederer, *Making Bricks without Straw: Nathanael Greene's Southern Campaign and Mao Tse-Tung's Mobile War* (Manhattan, Kansas: Sunflower University Press, 1983), 5,17.

The purpose of this paper is to provide historical relevance to current Marine Corps doctrinal concepts by examining the warfighting methods of General Francis Marion during the Revolutionary War. Was he just another successful commander, or was he an early practitioner of the warfighting doctrine that the Marine Corps has officially embraced? By studying the effectiveness of Marion's methods through the filter of current Marine Corps doctrinal concepts, this paper will contribute to the discussion of maneuver warfare as a viable warfighting doctrine. Following some introductory material, which is important to understanding the historical context of Marion's warfighting philosophy and operating environment, the first part of this analysis will study Francis Marion's style of warfare and relate it to the theory of war described in MCDP 1. This study will then focus on describing Francis Marion's integration of the six warfighting functions listed in Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication 1-2, *Campaigning*.<sup>7</sup> Lastly, this treatise will highlight some noteworthy aspects of Francis Marion's leadership style and make some concluding comments.

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<sup>7</sup> Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication 1-2, *Campaigning* (Washington, DC: U.S. Marine Corps, 1 August 1997), 76. Cited hereafter as MCDP 1-2. The six major warfighting functions listed in MCDP 1-2 are **command**

## Chapter 2

### Understanding The Swamp Fox and His Environment

*Maneuvers are threats; he who appears most threatening wins.*

Ardant du Picq<sup>8</sup>

Francis Marion was born at Winyaw,<sup>9</sup> South Carolina in 1732. His grandfather, Gabriel, was a Protestant who left France to escape religious persecution. As a youth, Francis dreamed of being a sailor, but after a harrowing shipwreck on his maiden voyage at the tender age of sixteen, he abandoned this inclination. Instead he settled on the Santee River and became a farmer.

#### *Cherokee War*

In 1759, Marion signed up as a volunteer in his brother's troop of cavalry when the Cherokee War broke out. In 1761, he served as a First Lieutenant in Captain William Moultrie's infantry company in an expedition with Colonel Grant against the Cherokees,

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**and control, maneuver, fires, intelligence, logistics, and force protection.**

<sup>8</sup> Colonel Robert D. Heintz Jr., USMC (Retired), *Dictionary of Military and Naval Quotations* (Annapolis, Maryland: United States Naval Institute, 1966), 2d printing, 1967, 179.

<sup>9</sup> Winyaw is near present day Georgetown, South Carolina. See map on page vi.



near the Indian town of Etchoce.<sup>10</sup> This is where Francis Marion got his first taste of combat. As Grant's force approached the scene of a previous ambush, they discovered that the Cherokees again lay in wait for them. Before Grant could advance, he had to dislodge them. Grant chose Lieutenant Marion for the hazardous operation and assigned him thirty men to accomplish the task.<sup>11</sup> Cautiously, yet rapidly, he led his men to the attack. Moving from tree to tree, they advanced into the pass. When they came within range, the Cherokees gave a war whoop and began pouring in a deadly fire. Man after man fell, but Marion kept them moving forward. In the end, twenty-one of Marion's men lay dead or wounded, but the main column was able to advance in pursuit of the fleeing Indians.<sup>12</sup>

Francis Marion emerged from the Cherokee War with a professional reputation for courage and coolness under fire. He gained valuable experience from fighting the Indians, particularly in the realm of small unit tactics. He learned how to extract the maximum possible advantage from terrain in terms of gaining a positional advantage over his enemy and in exploiting its features for cover and concealment.

### ***Second Regiment***

Following the Cherokee War, Francis returned to farming on the western bank of the Santee River. When relations between Great Britain and her colonies were deteriorating, Francis came down on the side of liberty, recalling the hardships his grandparents had suffered for their religious and political freedom. He became involved

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<sup>10</sup> Etchoce is most likely in present day North Carolina.

<sup>11</sup> William D. James, *A Sketch of the Life of Brigadier General Francis Marion and a History of His Brigade* (Charleston, South Carolina: Gould and Hilly, 1821), 15-17.

<sup>12</sup> Robert D. Bass, *Swamp Fox* (Orangeburg, South Carolina: Sandlapper Publishing Co., Inc., 1974), 9.

in local politics and was elected from St. John's Parish<sup>13</sup> to the first Provincial Congress, meeting in Charleston, South Carolina. The delegates adopted the American Bill of Rights and the Act of Association by which the colonies bound themselves not to import goods from Great Britain. The Provincial Congress also complied with a request from the Continental Congress to raise two regiments of infantry and one of cavalry to oppose the British. Francis Marion was appointed a captain in the Second Regiment, under the command of Colonel William Moultrie.<sup>14</sup> Following his promotion to major, Francis Marion commanded the left wing of troops at Fort Johnson,<sup>15</sup> helping to repulse Sir Henry Clinton's attempt to take Charleston, South Carolina on the 28<sup>th</sup> of June 1776. Personally directing the fire of his batteries throughout the day, Marion wreaked havoc with his cannons on the warships *Bristol* and *Experiment*, wounding Commodore Parker and Lord Cornwallis.<sup>16</sup>

### ***Britain's Southern Strategy***

Little military action occurred during the next few years in the southern states, as British strategy revolved around defeating General Washington's Continental Army in the north and trying to isolate the New England states, with successively botched campaigns launched from Canada. General "Gentleman Johnny" Burgoyne's loss at Saratoga in the fall of 1777 was a pivotal turning point in the British campaign against the rebellious colonies. When news of the victory reached France, Benjamin Franklin engineered a diplomatic triumph that was equally as important as the victory itself. King

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<sup>13</sup> St. John's Parish is predominantly located in present day Berkeley County.

<sup>14</sup> Bass, 11.

<sup>15</sup> Fort Johnson is in present day Charleston, South Carolina. See map on page vi.

<sup>16</sup> Bass, 16.

Louis XVI of France immediately signed a treaty agreeing to support America's insurrection and independence. For Great Britain's King George III and his ministers, the rebel alliance with France was their worst fear; it meant the likelihood of reconquering the former colonies was remote at best. The British fleet was needed in European waters to repel an invasion from France and in the West Indies to protect vital commercial interests. Henceforth, Great Britain's military goals in America would be greatly reduced. Operations would be moved to the south, where, it was believed, Loyalists would flock to the royal banner and where the army would remain close enough to the coast to be supported from the sea.<sup>17</sup>

In 1779, the War Office sent instructions for Sir Henry Clinton to conquer the southern colonies. After establishing a secure base in the south, and augmented by Loyalist militia, the British could then move north and defeat General Washington's Continental Army. Sir Henry Clinton moved on Charleston, South Carolina, in the spring of 1780, laying siege to the town. On May 12<sup>th</sup>, 1780, General Benjamin Lincoln, commander of the Southern Department of the Continental Army, surrendered Charleston to Sir Henry Clinton. Fortunately for Francis Marion, he had recently been ordered out of the besieged city due to an injury to his ankle. While Lord Cornwallis quickly overran South Carolina, Marion slipped away to meet the American Army coming down from the north. In July 1780, Marion joined General Gates, who had recently replaced General Lincoln as commander of the Southern Department of the Continental Army. In August 1780, Marion received permission from General Gates to take command of the

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<sup>17</sup> Richard M. Ketchum, *Saratoga: Turning Point of America's Revolutionary War* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1997), 446,447.

Williamsburg militia and start a boat-burning foray up the Santee River.<sup>18</sup> By this time, the British were confident that they were in firm control of South Carolina and enjoyed the widespread support of the population. Prior to General Marion's return, there was no organized resistance to British presence. To stymie any opposition, the British established strong points, at strategic locations in the south. It was into this target rich environment that Marion entered with his rag-tag militia.<sup>19</sup>

### *Marion's Strategy of Erosion*

Francis Marion's rugged frontier upbringing and warfighting experience in the Cherokee War combined to make him a natural guerrilla fighter. He was intimately familiar with the terrain he operated in, and was able to consistently leverage that knowledge to his advantage. He intuitively understood the capabilities of his partisan<sup>20</sup> forces and engaged the British-led forces accordingly. Mao Zedong, a more contemporary example of a successful guerrilla warrior, wrote the following about guerilla strategy.

Guerrilla strategy must be based primarily on alertness, mobility, and attack. Strategy must be adjusted to the enemy situation, the terrain, the existing lines of communication, the relative strengths, the weather, and the situation of the people. One must select the tactic of seeming to come from the east and attack from the west; avoid the solid, attack the hollow; attack; withdraw; deliver a lightening blow, seek a lightning decision. When guerrillas engage a stronger enemy, they withdraw when he advances; harass him when he stops; strike him when he is weary; pursue him when he withdraws. The enemy's rear, flanks, and other vulnerable spots are vital points, and there he must be harassed, attacked, dispersed, exhausted and annihilated.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Bass, 36.

<sup>19</sup> "Target rich environment" is a pet phrase of Professor "BlackJack" Matthews, Marine Corps University, Quantico, Virginia.

<sup>20</sup> Term used for irregular Revolutionary War militias or forces opposed to British sovereignty. Also referred to as Whigs.

<sup>21</sup> Fleet Marine Force Reference Publication 12-18, *Mao Tse-tung on Guerrilla Warfare* (Washington, DC: U.S. Marine Corps, 5 April 1989), 46. Cited hereafter as FMFRP 12-18.

Mao Zedong could well have been writing about Marion's methods of waging war on the British in the Revolutionary War. Francis Marion fought in a manner strikingly similar to Mao Zedong's description, long before Mao put pen to paper on guerrilla strategy.

Brigadier General Samuel B. Griffith, USMC (Retired), who, as a liaison officer in World War II with the Chinese, closely observed Mao Zedong's revolutionary movement and became a noted expert on guerrilla forces, wrote this affirmation of Francis Marion's guerrilla strategy:

Marion's tactics were those of all successful guerrillas. Operating with the greatest speed from inaccessible bases, which he changed frequently, he struck his blows in rapid succession at isolated garrisons, convoys, and trains. His information was always timely and accurate, for the people supported him. The British, unable to cope with Marion, branded him a criminal, and complained bitterly that he fought neither "like a gentleman" nor like "a Christian," a charge orthodox soldiers are wont to apply in all lands and in all wars to such ubiquitous, intangible, and deadly antagonists as Francis Marion.<sup>22</sup>

General Marion's methods, however, need not be limited to guerrilla warfare. His methods more accurately represented a particular way of thinking about fighting an enemy rather than employing any specific techniques, and thus can be applied across the spectrum of conflicts.

General George Washington's (Commander of the Continental Army) overall strategy of engaging the British has been called a strategy of erosion. It is too much to call the offensive aspect of his strategy attrition. It was to raids and attacks against detachments and outposts that General Washington turned. This was a modest policy, but one which offered some satisfaction to the country's aggressive impulses, and yet kept within the overall limits of caution to which wisdom impelled him.<sup>23</sup> Charting a similar course, Francis Marion also employed a strategy of erosion, which was the only strategy that made sense for his small partisan force. It was

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<sup>22</sup> FMFRP 12-18, 10.

<sup>23</sup> Russell F. Weigley, *The American Way of War* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1973), 1977 paperback edition, 15.

impractical for him to attempt a strategy of annihilation or incapacitation.<sup>24</sup> His men were neither trained nor equipped to go head to head with the British regular army. Instead, Francis Marion adopted an approach designed to give him the advantage during contacts of his choosing. The Marine Corps has attempted to solve the dilemma of fighting outnumbered by instituting a doctrinal shift to maneuver warfare and by developing capabilities-based forces. Capabilities-based forces outmatch the enemy's capability-set with superior friendly capabilities. The Marine Air-Ground Task Forces are equipped with a broad range of capabilities to flexibly engage a variety of threats.

General Marion's strategy of erosion enabled him to gradually wear away at the resolution of the British and Loyalist forces in his area of operations (central and eastern South Carolina) by persistent action against the periphery of their main forces.<sup>25</sup> The British considered Marion's method of engagement "ungentlemanly-like" warfare and beneath the dignity of real soldiers. As noted by Brigadier General Griffith above, the British complained bitterly about Francis Marion not fighting fairly. Francis Marion, however, was ultimately concerned not with fighting fairly but with fighting smarter. The most telling testament to Francis Marion's success in his erosion strategy comes from his most erstwhile and frequent British opponent, Lieutenant Colonel Banastre Tarleton,<sup>26</sup> commander of the infamous Dragoons of the British Legion in South Carolina. In his book, completed shortly after the Revolutionary War, Tarleton writes the following about Francis Marion:

Mr. Marion, by his zeal and abilities, showed himself capable of the trust committed to his charge. He collected his adherents at the shortest notice, in the neighborhood of the Black River, and, after making incursions into the friendly districts, or threatening the communications, to avoid pursuit, he disbanded his followers. The

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<sup>24</sup> See MCDP 1 for a more detailed discussion of these strategies.

<sup>25</sup> Weigley, 15.

<sup>26</sup> Lieutenant Colonel Tarleton is the person reputed to have coined the famous moniker "The Swamp Fox" for Francis Marion, following an unsuccessful chase into a formidable swamp.

alarm occasioned by these insurrections frequently retarded supplies on their way to the army.<sup>27</sup>

In the end Francis Marion's erosion strategy worked as intended. General Marion, in cooperation with the commanders of the Southern Department of the Continental Army, General Gage followed by General Greene, made life so unbearable for the British that they eventually lost the will to continue their campaign in the southern colonies.

### ***Maneuverist Mindset***

Francis Marion was a practicing maneuverist. The essence of maneuver warfare is taking action to generate and exploit some kind of advantage over the enemy as a means of accomplishing objectives as effectively as possible. That advantage may be psychological, technological, or temporal as well as spatial.<sup>28</sup> Central to the maneuverist's success is the idea of non-linearity, or gains that are disproportionate to the actual effort applied. Francis Marion magnified non-linearity in his engagements by fighting his opponents on his terms instead of theirs. General Marion's *modus operandi* was to maneuver to a position of advantage, concentrate his force, execute a surprise attack on the enemy, disperse his force, and infiltrate back to his hideout. This concept can currently be seen in the U.S. military's joint approach to warfare, whereby various capabilities are assembled from disparate locations around the globe with their effects concentrated on a critical vulnerability of the enemy, be it a physical or intangible target.

In order to be a successful maneuverist, a commander requires timely and accurate intelligence. Francis Marion made use of a two-pronged approach to gather intelligence

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<sup>27</sup> Lieutenant Colonel Banastre Tarleton, *A History of the Campaigns of 1780 and 1781, in the Southern Provinces of North America* (London, England: The Strand, 1787), 1967 reprint, 171.

<sup>28</sup> MCDP 1, 72.

information on the British and Loyalists. He collected valuable human intelligence from a sympathetic population, captured prisoners, and captured documents. He additionally sent out mounted patrols to keep active eyes on the enemy and report back anything unusual. General Marion would dispatch patrols in every direction, five or ten horsemen who rode at sunset and returned at daylight. They rode over trackless woods, gaining intelligence, stopping to encourage the Whigs and frighten the Tories.<sup>29</sup>

Good reconnaissance and intelligence gathering formed the basis for Francis Marion's plans through a maneuver warfare concept known as *reconnaissance pull* or *recon-pull*.<sup>30</sup> Recon-pull locates enemy weaknesses or *gaps* with reconnaissance forces, which the commander opportunistically exploits with his combat forces. General Marion's mounted patrols would relentlessly seek out enemy weaknesses, which he would then ruthlessly exploit. One of Marion's patrols discovered a Loyalist encampment with lax security at Tearcoat Swamp.<sup>31</sup> He quickly called for a muster of his troops, but kept his plans to himself for operational security reasons. To confuse his enemy, General Marion spread rumors that he was on his way to McCallum's Ferry.<sup>32</sup> He divided his men into three parties but waited till midnight before he attacked. Sending a detachment to swing around and approach the field from the right and a second detachment to move to the left, Marion headed toward the center of the camp with his main force. At the flash of his pistol the three divisions charged, shouting and screaming and firing as they galloped. Completely surprised, the Tories sprang up, frightened and bewildered. Never did the fury of their striking power more impress the Tories.<sup>33</sup> In this example, as in many

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<sup>29</sup> Bass, 75.

<sup>30</sup> For a more detailed discussion of the "reconnaissance pull" or "recon-pull" concept see William S. Lind's book, *The Maneuver Warfare Handbook*, Chapters 2 & 3.

<sup>31</sup> Tearcoat Swamp is located to the southeast of the High Hills of Santee. See map on page vi.

<sup>32</sup> McCallum's Ferry is near present Bishopville, South Carolina. See map on page vi.

<sup>33</sup> Bass, 76,77.



others, Francis Marion brilliantly used his reconnaissance and intelligence collection assets to develop a simple plan that swiftly exploited a fleeting opportunity to strike his enemy. Two Marine Corps infantry divisions used this same tactic in attacking the Iraqi obstacle belts in southern Kuwait during Operation Desert Storm. Using reconnaissance assets, the division commanders located the weakest points in the obstacle belts and attacked with the preponderance of their combat power through these *gaps* in the Iraqi defenses.

### ***Speed and Focus***

Francis Marion instinctively understood one of the most basic maneuver warfare concepts; attack an enemy's weakness with your strength. One of his great strengths lay in his ability to act quickly. With his rapidity of action, Francis Marion repeatedly surprised his enemies and generated an operating tempo which they were unable to match. Marine Corps warfighting doctrine addresses *speed* and *focus* as two concepts of universal significance in generating combat power. Speed is rapidity of action and applies to both time and space. Speed over time is tempo—the consistent ability to operate quickly. Speed over distance, or space, is the ability to move rapidly. Both forms are genuine sources of combat power. In other words, speed is a weapon. Focus is the convergence of effects in time and space on some objective. It is the generation of superior combat power at a particular time and place.<sup>34</sup> Francis Marion's plans revolved around these twin concepts of *speed* and *focus*, giving him a distinct tactical advantage over his opponents. Once General Marion had formulated a plan, he would rapidly gather up his force, move into an advantageous position, and focus his striking power at his enemy's vulnerabilities. His repeated successes hinged on his superior ability to integrate the critical ingredients of *speed* and *focus* in his tactical plans.

### *Initiative and Response*

Francis Marion rarely relinquished the initiative to his enemy. He was taken by surprise only on a very few occasions, such as when Colonel Doyle, a Loyalist commanding the New York Volunteers, found and attacked Francis Marion's hideout on Snow's Island.<sup>35</sup> Fortunately for Francis Marion, he was away from his camp with his main force having just won a victory over the British at Sampit.<sup>36</sup> Normally, Marion retained the initiative through superior intelligence gathering and a decisiveness that quickly mobilized his striking power to attack his opponents. General Marion kept his enemy off balance by keeping in constant motion, moving by night as frequently as by day, singularly well informed by his scouts. He fluctuated quickly from responding to events to seizing the initiative from the enemy. By taking the initiative, we dictate the terms of the conflict and force the enemy to meet us on our terms. It is through the initiative that we seek to impose our will on the enemy.<sup>37</sup>

Employing the element of deception, Francis Marion was adept at leading the enemy into thinking he was merely responding to their actions and then turning the tables on them with his striking power. At Blue Savannah,<sup>38</sup> General Marion put a select party of his men in an ambush. He then faked a retreat with another party of his men, which lured his enemy from their strong positions and into his prearranged trap.<sup>39</sup> Time and again, General Marion responded swiftly to reports from his scouts and seized the initiative from his opponents by acting faster. He used the defense as merely another way of striking at his opponents. In a like fashion, contemporary

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<sup>34</sup> MCDP 1, 40,41.

<sup>35</sup> Snow's Island is located at the juncture of Lynches River and Peedee River, bordering present day Marion County. See map on page vi.

<sup>36</sup> Sampit is near present day Georgetown, South Carolina. See map on page vi.

<sup>37</sup> MCDP 1, 32,33.

<sup>38</sup> Blue Savannah is located in present day Marion County. See map on page vi.

<sup>39</sup> Simms, 124.

Marine Corps tactics emphasize using offensive blows in the defense to retain the initiative and attack enemy vulnerabilities.

### *Surprise*

There are three basic ways to go about achieving surprise. The first is through *deception*—to convince the enemy we are going to do something other than what we are really going to do in order to induce him to act in a manner prejudicial to his own interests. The intent is to give the enemy a clear picture of the situation, but the wrong picture. The second way is through *ambiguity*—to act in such a way that the enemy does not know what to expect. Because he does not know what to expect, he must prepare for numerous possibilities and cannot prepare adequately for any one. The third is through *stealth*—to deny the enemy any knowledge of impending action. The enemy is not deceived or confused as to our intentions but is completely ignorant of them. Of the three, deception generally offers the greatest effects but is most difficult to achieve.<sup>40</sup>

Surprise was the single most determining factor in General Marion's repeated tactical victories. Francis Marion was consistently successful at surprising his enemies. He achieved surprise through a variety of means. Francis Marion routinely cloaked his true objective by having his patrols spread false rumors about his intentions, knowing that enemy spies would pass the deceptive information along to the British for a small fee. He would also send out patrols in a direction that was not his intended route of attack. This ambiguity ensured that anyone watching his movements would be deluded into inaccurately reporting his next intended target. Francis Marion regularly faked certain actions to deceive his opponents, as noted above when he

enticed his enemy from their stronger positions by pretending to retreat. Marion used this same tactic repeatedly as when he defeated another band of Tories under Captain Barfield, having drawn him from a strong position by faking a retreat.<sup>41</sup>

Francis Marion earned the bulk of his victories from masterfully employing stealthy means. He operated mainly at night, allowing his forces to take full advantage of darkness to hide their moves. The British were not as proficient operating at night and were often lulled into a false sense of security behind the walls of their strong points. Tarleton Brown served with Francis Marion and describes in his memoirs a typical use of night to achieve surprise and its results:

It was my good fortune to accompany the latter [Marion]. Just about the break of day we charged upon the enemy, and our appearance was so sudden and unexpected that they had not time even to fire a single gun. We took thirty-three prisoners; found twenty odd hogsheads of old spirits, and a large supply of provisions. The former we destroyed, but returned with the latter and our prisoners to the army on the Santee.<sup>42</sup>

Francis Marion further used superior mobility and operational tempo to surprise the British and Loyalists. His men rode the finest horses available and their intimate knowledge of the local terrain was unmatched by their opponents. They were lightly equipped and could move from place to place much faster than the British, who carried heavier loads and were hamstrung by a much larger logistics tail. Francis Marion enhanced his mobility relative to his opponents by using his intimate knowledge of the local swamps to hide his force and further frustrate the efforts of the British to locate and destroy him. Likewise, the forward deployment and training of Marine Corps forces around the world increases its familiarity with local areas wherein it may be called upon to operate. Additionally, the recent focus in the Marine Corps on intelligence

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<sup>40</sup> MCDP 1, 43,44.

<sup>41</sup> Cecil B. Hartley, *Heroes and Patriots of the South* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: G.G. Evans, 1860), 129.

<sup>42</sup> Tarleton Brown, *Memoirs of Tarleton Brown: A Captain in the Revolutionary Army* (New York, 1862),  
Posted on the World Wide Web at: <http://foclark.tripod.com/allendale/tbrownintro.htm>

resulted in the establishment of the Marine Corps Intelligence Activity, which is tasked with providing detailed intelligence on potential hotspots to the operating forces.

In a manner similar to General Marion, the Marine Corps emphasizes operating at night to enhance the element of surprise. The guidance given by some Marine commanders to their subordinates is to conduct at a minimum one third of their training during the night.

Furthermore, new technology, like the advanced assault amphibious vehicle (AAAV) and the Osprey aircraft, will enhance the Marine Corps' ability to achieve tactical surprise through over-the-horizon standoff and being able to rapidly assault by air and sea from ship to shore.

Moreover, the Marine Corps is attempting to provide Marines with lighter, more capable, equipment and clothing to reduce the logistics footprint and enhance the ability of Marines to achieve surprise. First Marine Division created Task Force Troy during the Gulf War for the sole purpose of deceiving the Iraqi defenders as to the actual location of attack for the division's main effort. Marine Corps tactics stress using deception in all operations to undermine and confuse the enemy.

### ***Orienting on the Enemy***

Orienting on the enemy is fundamental to maneuver warfare. Maneuver warfare attacks the enemy *system*. Military professionals need to understand the unique characteristics that make the enemy system function so that it can be penetrated, torn apart, and, if necessary, the isolated components destroyed.<sup>43</sup> The enemy system Francis Marion faced in the Revolutionary War was composed of the regular British Army and Loyalist militias. He oriented his attacks on their vulnerabilities to tear apart their system at its seams. His focus was solely on the enemy confronting him and not on geographic features or terrain objectives. Prior to any attack, he had

solid intelligence to confirm his plan of attack. His execution was swift enough to ensure that he achieved tactical surprise. In combating the British Army, Francis Marion attacked the extended enemy lines of supply between their strong points. When they responded by sending troops after him, he either retreated back to the swamps or attacked one of their weakened forts. This vicious cycle prevented the British from controlling the countryside and gave Francis Marion free reign in many areas.

The key for British success in the south was to control the countryside. The fickle populace quite often based their support on who had the immediate control of their lands. However, it was a Catch-22 situation for the British. To effectively control the countryside required weakening the manpower at their forts, which could then be isolated and attacked by Marion's militia. On the other hand, when they strengthened their forts, their lines of supply were vulnerable to attack and they were unable to successfully control the countryside. Sir Henry Clinton compounded the problems of his southern campaign by demanding loyalty oaths from inhabitants to demonstrate their fealty to King George III, similar to a failed policy that had been implemented previously in the northern colonies, earlier in the Revolutionary War. However, the inhabitants' allegiance was tenuous and contingent on the presence of British military forces in the area. When the British forces departed to meet threats elsewhere, the inhabitants' loyalties often switched in accordance with whichever militia force was more powerful. In many instances, Tories suddenly became Whigs when Marion's men were in control of an area. Francis Marion was keenly aware of this tendency by the indigenous citizenry to vacillate in their support and took extra precautions to protect his force by maintaining their alertness.

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<sup>43</sup> MCDP 1, 76,77.

The American military faced an analogous problem with shifting loyalties in the Vietnam War. Local popular support depended on the presence of strong American forces. As soon as they departed from an area, the Viet Cong guerillas moved in to intimidate the population into supporting their operations against the Americans. The Marine Corps recognized this visceral struggle for the “hearts and minds” of the Vietnamese and established a short-lived, but highly successful, program to address the problem. Called the Combined Action Program (CAP), it involved taking a squad of infantry Marines, with a Navy medical Corpsman, and stationing them in a strategically located hamlet. Ostensibly, their purpose was to protect the hamlet from the Viet Cong. Additionally, they trained men from the hamlet to protect themselves. The Corpsman endeared himself to the inhabitants by providing them with free medical care. In several instances, Marines further assisted by teaching classes to schoolchildren. The Marine Corps enhanced the program by carefully selecting the participating officers and Marines. Unfortunately for America, some senior members in the chain of command did not view the Combined Action Program with the same optimism of Marine commanders, and it was discontinued.

During the Vietnam War, military leaders were focused more on terrain objectives than on the enemy. Orders usually specified the seizure of terrain features, which were subsequently abandoned, only to be retaken at a later date. Contemporary Marine Corps doctrine recognizes the need, as did General Marion in the Revolutionary War, to focus on defeating the enemy system. In Operation Desert Storm, the enemy system was attacked systematically and with such success that when the two Marine divisions moved into Kuwait the Iraqi defenders were unable to stop them. The Gulf War victory can be chalked up to knowing the enemy and, like Francis

Marion, synergistically combining the disparate capabilities across the Joint & Combined Task Force and focusing their effects on the enemy's critical vulnerabilities.

### **Chapter 3**

#### **Synergy and the Six Warfighting Functions**

*He who knows when he can fight and when he cannot will be victorious.*

**Sun Tzu<sup>44</sup>**

The conduct of a successful campaign requires the integration of many disparate efforts. Effective action in any single warfighting function is rarely decisive in and of itself. Maximum impact is obtained when all warfighting functions are harmonized to accomplish the desired strategic objective in the shortest time possible and with minimal casualties.<sup>45</sup>

General Marion's actions provided a complementary synergistic effect to General Greene's operations against the British. Whereas General Greene's maneuvers with his

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<sup>44</sup> Colonel Robert D. Heintz Jr., USMC (Retired), *Dictionary of Military and Naval Quotations* (Annapolis, Maryland: United States Naval Institute, 1966), 2d printing, 1967, 130.

<sup>45</sup> MCDP 1-2, 75.



Continental Army tended to concentrate the combat power of the British, as they massed to meet his threat, Francis Marion's actions had the opposite effect of dispersing the British forces as they tried to control the countryside and protect their lines of supply. The effect of constantly dispersing and massing to meet these disparate threats confounded and frustrated the British commanders. Likewise, General Greene reinforced Francis Marion's operational synergy by providing him on occasion with the augmentation of Lieutenant Colonel Harry Lee's<sup>46</sup> cavalry to attack British forts and secure vital supplies. Lieutenant Colonel Lee's reinforcing of Marion's militia created a joint synergy through the melding of their combined capabilities. Their joint force succeeded several times in defeating the British, most notably at Fort Watson.<sup>47</sup>

General Greene and General Marion exhausted the resources of their opponents and, in the end, crippled their will to fight. Francis Marion's brilliance was not in his singular emphasis on any one of the six warfighting functions, but rather in his gifted ability to weave them all into a highly functional tapestry. Partly due to his previous experience fighting Indians and partly due to his native senses, he possessed a talent for incorporating these functions into all aspects of his warfighting.

### ***Command & Control***

Command and control is the means by which a commander recognizes what needs to be done and sees to it that appropriate actions are taken. No single activity in war is more important than command and control. Without command and control, military units degenerate into mobs, the subordination of military force to policy is replaced by random

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<sup>46</sup> Lieutenant Colonel Harry Lee was the father of General Robert E. Lee of Civil War fame, as commander of the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia.

<sup>47</sup> Fort Watson is located in present day Clarendon County, near the shore of Lake Marion. See map on page vi.

violence, and it is impossible to conduct a campaign. Command and control encompasses all military operations and functions, harmonizing them into a meaningful whole. It provides the intellectual framework and physical structures through which commanders transmit their intent and decisions to the force and receive feedback on the results.<sup>48</sup>

General Marion's subordinate leaders greatly facilitated the command and control of his militia force. His junior leaders were trusted men who were highly respected by their men. They ensured his plans and policies were implemented in accordance with his desires. As a man of few words, much of Marion's communication with his junior leaders was conducted implicitly. His subordinate commanders knew him so well that they could anticipate what their commander wanted them to do in a given situation. They could execute his orders faster since they didn't have to continually ask him what he meant. A unit that depends exclusively on explicit communication has an inherently reduced operational tempo as it awaits verbal or written orders from its commander. Many times explicit communication is required, but the more implicit, the greater will be the efficiencies in the expenditure of time and effort, and the ability to generate increased operational tempo. Furthermore, implicit communications makes it virtually impossible for one's enemy to break the code.

General Marion's "brigade" was primarily composed of local citizens who were moved to join his resistance by their inflamed passions. Many had friends and relatives who had been murdered by the Loyalists and British in addition to their personal property being confiscated or destroyed. They wanted revenge and to exact it they joined Francis Marion's force. Motives of private anger and personal revenge embittered and increased the usual ferocities of war. Hundreds of dreadful and desperate tragedies gave that peculiar aspect to the struggle, which led

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<sup>48</sup> MCDP 1-2, 76.

General Greene to say that the inhabitants pursued each other rather like wild beasts than like men.<sup>49</sup> While most of them did not have any real military experience, they had hunted and worked on farms, in addition to having an intimate knowledge of the local geography. General Marion's main problem was in keeping them together. At any given moment, several or more of his troops would want to take off to check on their homes and families, forcing him to change plans and presenting him with a command and control nightmare. Understanding their conflicting desires to fight oppression and to tend to their private matters at home, General Marion disbanded his militia on several occasions to alleviate his men's anxiety, banking on the hope that they would quickly assemble when summoned. To reconstitute his force for action, Francis Marion had to rely on his officers to ride the countryside and round them up. Often, individual troops decided not to return to action or their personal circumstances prevented them from leaving their families. Given these intolerable personnel considerations, it is amazing that Francis Marion was ever able to conduct any resistance activities against the Loyalists and British. However, he patiently worked with the available manpower, and skillfully commanded his men to numerous tactical victories.

General Marion was a "hands on" planner of his tactical engagements. He planned centrally and put his most trusted subordinates in charge to carry out his plans; centralized planning and decentralized execution, a tenet the Marine Corps strives to emulate. For operational security reasons, he entrusted his schemes to nobody, not even his most confidential officers. He consulted with them respectfully, heard them patiently, weighed their suggestions, but silently reached his own conclusions. They knew his determinations only from his actions. He left no track behind him, if it were possible to avoid it.<sup>50</sup> Francis Marion had two main

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<sup>49</sup> Simms, 162.

<sup>50</sup> Simms, 169.

purposes for keeping a tight reign on his plans. First and foremost, he didn't want a plan to be revealed prematurely to his opponents by a spy in his midst, or through the capture of one of his men. In the civil war that raged between the Whigs and Tories, one could never be absolutely certain of loyalties. Secondly, he was willing to take full responsibility for the success or failure of his brigade's engagements. If there was to be any blame for a failure, Francis Marion wanted to accept it personally and not allow that burden to fall on his subordinate leaders.

A fundamental imperative of command is the placement of the commander in the position which best facilitates his ability to influence the action. Unlike General Gates at the Battle of Saratoga, General Marion positioned himself where he could exert the most positive influence on the outcome of the engagement. He fearlessly commanded from the front, controlling the action as much as possible and inspiring his men by his example.

General Marion used various ways to control his men in the heat of battle. When battling the Loyalists he had his men use a distinguishing feature to prevent fratricide by ensuring they could differentiate each other from their enemy. He had them place white feathers in their caps, as both his militia and the Tories wore homespun clothes.<sup>51</sup> When conducting a deliberate attack, Francis Marion used the sound and flash from his pistol to initiate the engagement.<sup>52</sup> If a deliberate attack failed to achieve immediate surprise, Francis Marion's subordinate leaders were trained to quickly press the attack in order to retain the initiative in their striking power. Likewise, in meeting engagements, Francis Marion's men were trained in immediate action techniques to press forward with a hasty attack on the enemy, as illustrated in the following account:

On this occasion Major James pursuing Gainey in his flight, rode far beyond the support of his men, but extricated himself by turning back on his horse, waving his sword

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<sup>51</sup> Bass, 49.

<sup>52</sup> Bass, 77.

and calling out, as if his men were close behind him, “Come on, boys, here they are,” and then dashing in amongst the Tories, who speedily resumed their rapid retreat.<sup>53</sup>

In this instance, Major James’ deception magnified the effect of his immediate action drill.

Francis Marion frequently used the cover of darkness to hide the movement of his forces. He developed a novel method to maintain positive communication with his scouts, who were handpicked for their important duty. The scouts were taught a peculiar and shrill whistle, which, at night, could be heard at a great distance.<sup>54</sup> The unique and varied ways of signaling he developed, enhanced General Marion’s ability to command and control his militia force and to communicate internally in order to obtain a clear tactical picture of the enemy’s disposition.

### ***Maneuver***

Maneuver is the movement of forces for the purpose of gaining an advantage over the enemy in order to accomplish an objective. The ultimate purpose in using maneuver is not to avoid battle, but to give one such an advantage that the result of the battle is a matter of course. Superior mobility—the capability to move from place to place faster than the enemy while retaining the ability to perform the mission—is a key ingredient of maneuver. The objective of maneuver is to use mobility to gain an advantage by creating superiority at the critical point of battle or to avoid disadvantageous battle altogether.<sup>55</sup>

General Marion possessed an intuitive grasp of the importance of maneuvering his force into an advantageous position with respect to his enemies. Unlike the British, he knew he could not successfully resist from strong points, which would only expose his militia to being cut up

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<sup>53</sup> Hartley, 129.

<sup>54</sup> Simms, 170.

<sup>55</sup> MCDP 1-2, 77-80.

completely.<sup>56</sup> Rather, he incessantly presented the British with a tactical and operational dilemma. His rapid movements and secret expeditions cut off the communication between their posts, and threw their whole system of government and military surveillance into confusion. It interfered with all their plans for insuring and perpetuating their dominance of the southern colonies. Marion's active mode of carrying on the war was exceedingly distasteful to Cornwallis, Rawdon, and the other British commanders. They had military posts established throughout North and South Carolina on which their continued presence depended.<sup>57</sup> Marion would sever the lines of supply between their established strong points, if they remained entrenched behind the bulwarks. On the other hand, when they ventured out from the strong points to attack him or spread out security detachments to protect their vulnerable lines of supply, he would move to either directly threaten their strong points or mass his force to overwhelm their separate detachments. This method of warfare tried the patience, and baffled the progress, of the British Commander. Lord Cornwallis could overrun the country, but he could make no conquests. His army passed over the land unquestioned, but when he withdrew, his posts were assailed, his detachments were cut off, and his supplies interdicted.<sup>58</sup>

Francis Marion was a superb supporting effort to General Greene's operational maneuvers in the southern colonies. He greatly assisted Greene by engaging the British and Loyalists in South Carolina. When Cornwallis took the main army of the British to engage General Greene in North Carolina, Marion's was the only force that was actively operating against the enemy in South Carolina. He cut off detachments and supplies intended for the main army, and scoured the countryside to counter the influence of the Tory militias.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Simms, 125.

<sup>57</sup> Hartley, 148, 149.

<sup>58</sup> Simms, 156.

<sup>59</sup> Hartley, 148.

Contributing significantly to his successful maneuvering was Francis Marion's superior mobility. Often, prior to striking a blow, he moved his militia sixty or seventy miles in twenty-four hours. His favorite time for moving was with the setting sun, and then the march normally continued all night.<sup>60</sup> The British could not match Francis Marion's mobility, which conferred on him an asymmetric advantage in maneuver. He used this advantage to retain the initiative and to favorably shape an impending encounter. During the fall of 1780, the Swamp Fox caused serious problems for the British. He harassed British supply lines by dividing his forces into several small groups and attacking separate points of the line simultaneously. Each attack lasted only minutes, utterly confusing the enemy.<sup>61</sup> By dividing his force and synchronizing his attacks, General Marion maneuvered his forces into advantageous positions enabling them to rapidly deliver multiple blows to a stunned enemy. In maneuvering his forces into advantageous positions from which to attack the enemy system, he accomplished the fundamental principle of maneuver warfare.

Marion's activities dampened the enthusiasm of Loyalists for the British cause. His mobility further inhibited the Loyalists from massing and assisting the British Army. In fact, there were several occasions when defeated Loyalists actually joined his partisan force, desiring to be on the winning side of the war. Marion was often criticized for accepting them, but he felt that even reformed Loyalists deserved a second chance.<sup>62</sup>

Francis Marion did not hesitate to discard equipment that adversely impacted on the mobility of his force. On one occasion he wheeled two field pieces into a swamp when he realized they were totally unsuited to his rapid movements and his quick methods of attack and

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<sup>60</sup> Simms, 170.

<sup>61</sup> Dennis R Maher, "Francis Marion: The Swamp Fox." *National Historical Society* (January 1985): 8.

<sup>62</sup> Maher, 8.

retreat.<sup>63</sup> He correctly concluded that the contribution mobility made to his ability to maneuver was greater than the advantage conferred by increased firepower. The Marine Corps today is working hard to solve the same dilemma of mobility versus firepower that General Marion faced. The idea for the new lightweight howitzer was born of a desire to procure reliable artillery that is capable of greater mobility, with a reduced logistical burden. Likewise, the Advanced Assault Amphibious Vehicle (AAAV) and the Osprey tiltrotor aircraft are being procured by the Marine Corps to enhance maneuver capability for the Operational Maneuver from the Sea (OMFTS) concept. Employment of these mobility assets will allow the Marine Corps to perform Ship-to-Objective Maneuver (STOM) in order to attack directly at enemy vulnerabilities. As it remains in our modern day and age, mobility was the key to Francis Marion's style of warfare, for it enabled him to maneuver into positions that gave him the upper hand over his opponents. His mobility greatly facilitated accomplishing his mission of severing the British lines of supply.

### ***Fires***

Fires are employed to delay, disrupt, degrade, or destroy enemy capabilities, forces, or facilities as well as to affect the enemy's will to fight. Our use of fires is the selective application to reduce or eliminate a key element, resulting in a major disabling of the enemy system. We use fires in harmony with maneuver against those enemy capabilities, the loss of which can have a decisive impact on the outcome of an engagement.<sup>64</sup> General Marion and his men were extremely resourceful in the employment of fires to create an untenable situation for their opponents. While besieging Fort Watson<sup>65</sup> with Lieutenant Colonel Lee's cavalry, he

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<sup>63</sup> Hartley, 186.

<sup>64</sup> MCDP 1-2, 81,82.

<sup>65</sup> Fort Watson is located in present day Clarendon County, near the shore of Lake Marion. See map on page vi.



stationed marksmen between the stockade and Scott's lake to prevent the defenders from drawing drinking water. The defenders were enterprising, however, and immediately dug a well, which struck water. The siege of Fort Watson turned into a stalemate until one of Marion's men came up with a brilliant way to utilize their rifle fires to put the fort's occupants in an indefensible position. His suggestion was that a tower be built high enough to allow the riflemen to fire at targets within the walls of the fort. Some men were immediately sent off to collect all axes in the vicinity. Other men were ordered into the woods to cut and trim trees, with the logs to be piled out of range of musket fire from the fort. For five days, the logs were cut to size and notched on the ends. When the tower reached a height higher than the walls of the fort, a floor was laid. In front of this platform a shield of thick timber was thrown up to protect the riflemen from small-arms fire. Just before dawn on the sixth day, a detail of riflemen with their first fire drove the defenders to cover. As these riflemen provided a covering fire, a party of men rushed forward and began to pull away a section of the obstacle at the base of the stockade. Behind them, at a safe distance, stood the infantry, bayonets fixed, ready to make the final charge. With his men unable to expose themselves to return the fire from the tower, the commander of the fort wisely ran up the white flag of surrender.<sup>66</sup>

Similarly, General Marion used his more accurate rifle fire to stave off British attacks by pinning them down at critical choke points like bridges and fords. His sharpshooters were also trained to kill British officers in order to degrade their battlefield command and control. The sharpshooting of Marion's men was terrifying. One British commander declared that he never had seen such shooting in his life. He wrote to Marion, bitterly complaining of his mode of warfare, and daring him to come out and fight him like a gentleman and a Christian.<sup>67</sup> When the

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<sup>66</sup> Rankin, 188,189.

<sup>67</sup> Hartley, 151.

British were in the defense, Marion's sharpshooters would target their sentinels to allow his men to sneak up on their positions. This mode of warfare violated the British officers' concept of fairness and infuriated them to no end. Marion responded to their complaints by pointing out that the British practices of burning houses, destroying crops, and hanging prisoners were worse than his shooting sentinels and that he would continue to retaliate in kind.<sup>68</sup>

General Marion and Lieutenant Colonel Lee used an imaginative combined arms concept against Captain McPherson at Fort Motte.<sup>69</sup> The Motte house was tied into the defenses of the fort in such a fashion that its removal would provide instant access to the interior of the stockade.

It was now about noon, and the rays of the scorching sun had prepared the shingle roof for the projected conflagration. The return of Irwin was immediately followed by the application of the bow and arrows. The first arrow struck, and communicated its fire; a second shot at another quarter of the roof, and a third at a third quarter; this last also took effect, and, like the first, soon kindled a blaze. McPherson ordered a party to repair to the loft of the house, and by knocking off the shingles to stop the flames. This was soon perceived, and Captain Finley was directed to open his battery, raking the loft from end to end. The fire of our six pounder, posted close to one of the gable ends of the house, soon drove the soldiers down; and no other effort to stop the flames being practicable, McPherson hung out the white flag.<sup>70</sup>

This creative genius for using unique solutions to complex problems was General Marion's stock in trade. Marines during the Korean War displayed this same capacity for ingenuity and adaptability when they used anti-tank rockets against human wave attacks by Chinese soldiers. Like Marion's men, Marines today are continually encouraged to "think outside the box" by coming up with creative ways to solve problems.

General Marion demonstrated at Fort Motte a clear understanding of the concept of combined arms—using one's direct and indirect fire assets to put the enemy on the "horns of a dilemma"—where no matter what the enemy does, he is faced with an untenable situation.

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<sup>68</sup> Hartley, 149,150.

<sup>69</sup> Fort Motte is located near present day St. Matthews, South Carolina. See map on page vi.

<sup>70</sup> Hartley, 165,166.

Today's Marines at all levels, from the fire team to the Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF), are taught the concept of combined arms and trained to integrate their organic and supporting weapons with the concept of operations.

### *Intelligence*

Before, during and after the conduct of operations, intelligence assists us in developing and refining our understanding of the situation, alerts us to new opportunities, and helps to assess the effects of our actions upon the enemy. Intelligence cannot provide certainty; uncertainty is an inherent attribute of war. Rather, intelligence attempts to reduce uncertainty to a reasonable level.<sup>71</sup> Accurate tactical intelligence was supremely important to Francis Marion's actions against the British and Loyalists. General Marion meticulously selected quality men for the critical duty of scouting and gathering intelligence. His scouts were always his best men. They were generally excellent horsemen, and first-rate marksmen. He dispatched his scouts in all directions to patrol and spy.<sup>72</sup> While General Marion's best source of intelligence was from his own scouts, he did collect valuable intelligence from other sources.

Captured couriers were intelligence windfalls as they often carried letters between military commanders. Other sources of intelligence came from prisoners and deserters; however, Francis Marion learned through experience that this intelligence was often misinformation and needed to be confirmed. Another significant source of intelligence came from that portion of the population sympathetic to the patriot cause. Today, the Marine Corps uses human exploitation

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<sup>71</sup> MCDP 1-2, 83.

<sup>72</sup> Simms, 171.

teams (HETs) to exploit these same forms of tactical human intelligence (TAC HUMINT) that General Marion used during the Revolutionary War. The Marine Corps normally uses human intelligence to confirm intelligence collected from other sources. As in General Marion's area of operations, human intelligence is particularly vital in military operations other than war (MOOTW), where the enemy may not be detectable by other means.

Equally vital was the operational intelligence General Marion provided to his superior, General Greene. One of his specific tasking from General Greene was to supply him with quality intelligence. General Greene ordered Marion to forward intelligence to him about British troop movements, troop strength, losses in combat and from disease, and all other matters which might have a bearing on forthcoming military operations.<sup>73</sup> Despite the lack of hard money with which to pay spies and couriers, General Marion promised to do his best.<sup>74</sup> Through on-the-job experience, he became very proficient in reporting accurate intelligence. In dozens of letters which followed, he reported information to Greene on regimental designations where possible, troop strength, number of artillery pieces accompanying the enemy, and the enemy's losses when he was able to ascertain them. As he formulated reliable rules of evidence, Marion learned to verify the information by various means. And, he educated himself to avoid forwarding rumors without labeling them as such. To Marion's credit, however, he rarely sent Greene rumors of victories or defeats in faraway places. He usually confined himself to reporting facts, which he or some of his officers had observed.<sup>75</sup> Marion supplied General Greene with key intelligence on the British that allowed him to make operational decisions for the employment of his combat power. General Marion's success was evident in that the British never took Greene's army by surprise. The tactical intelligence that Marion's scouts gathered gave him the upper hand in the

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<sup>73</sup> Kyte, 216.

<sup>74</sup> Kyte, 216.

majority of his actions against the British and Loyalists. Through hands-on experience, he became accomplished at evaluating intelligence that enabled him to maneuver his militia to an advantageous position from where they could attack their enemies.

The Marine Corps rightly focuses great attention on the collection of intelligence. Intelligence is critical to understanding the enemy and the environment where operations will take place and is a prerequisite for success in war. Intelligence in the Gulf War provided the detailed understanding of critical vulnerabilities in Iraqi air and ground defenses, which contributed to the thorough defeat of Iraqi ground forces. The information revolution has provided commanders with access to greater levels of intelligence at their fingertips. In today's Marine Corps, the key lies in commanders understanding what intelligence is relevant to accomplishing their mission and successfully communicating their requirements to the collectors. If they don't know how to hone in on the intelligence that is critical to the mission at hand, they face the possibility of becoming overwhelmed by mountains of meaningless information. Even with today's profusion of intelligence, commanders must still learn to operate, as did General Marion, within the bounds of uncertainty.

### ***Logistics***

Logistics dictates what is possible and what is not. Logistics encompasses all activities required to move and sustain military forces. The provision of logistics in the conduct of operations demands adaptability. We must expect our plans to change.<sup>75</sup> General Marion's militia continuously struggled with obtaining logistical support. The procurement of subsistence

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<sup>75</sup> Kyte, 217.

<sup>76</sup> MCDP 1-2, 85-87.

for his men engrossed his entire mind.<sup>77</sup> The partisans were expected by the Continental Army to provide for themselves. In addition to his own logistical problems, General Marion was tasked to provide General Greene's Continental Army with logistical support.

Perhaps the most important of Marion's services during the summer of 1781 was the collecting of food and fodder for the use of Greene's troops—and also for the purpose of preventing the British from getting them. Driving cattle and carrying off supplies of corn, rice, and salt was hardly glamorous work. But it had to be done, and Marion's men rode widely through the country south of the Santee on their foraging missions.<sup>78</sup> General Marion didn't let shortages of ammunition prevent him from attacking his

enemies. Marion's men often lacked adequate ammunition for battle and had to be patient until an opportunity emerged. General Marion frequently went into action with less than three rounds to a man—half of his men were sometimes on-lookers because of the lack of arms and ammunition—waiting to see the fall of friends or enemies, in order to obtain the necessary means of taking part in the engagement.<sup>79</sup> The shortages of ammunition generated a creative adaptability instead of grumbling and despair. To remedy his deficiency in ammunition, General Marion took saws from the mills and set smiths to work, to turn them into swords—necessity is the mother of invention. He used this same ingenuity to supply and arm his militia in many non-standard ways. Other important sources of General Marion's supplies were spoils from his defeated enemies.

Francis Marion's style of warfare required a Spartan existence. His brigade's frugality was no doubt not of their choosing but it did help them remain light, mobile, and flexible. The lack of bare necessities gave birth to creative solutions to solve imminent challenges. General Marion did not allow the lack of full logistical support to hinder his desire to defeat the British. He consistently overcame his brigade's logistical inadequacies through improvisation.

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<sup>77</sup> Hartley, 128.

<sup>78</sup> Kyte, 221.

<sup>79</sup> Simms, 125.

The Marine Corps has attempted to solve the problem of logistics over the past two decades by pre-positioning supplies and equipments in strategic locations around the globe on ships capable of reaching potential hot spots in a matter of days. Furthermore, forward deployed Marine Corps forces carry their own sustainment that allows them to freely operate until the arrival and off-load of the maritime pre-positioned ships. This concept of pre-positioning ships was validated in the Gulf War during the initial buildup and sustainment of ground forces. Indeed, it was such a monumental success that the U.S. Army has purchased their own fleet of ships for future contingencies. Another significant source of logistics the armed services try to tap is host nation support. During the Gulf War, Saudi Arabia supplied petroleum products directly to the coalition forces, as well as numerous other products and services. In General Marion's era, host nation support meant foraging in the operating area to supply his men, which was greatly assisted by the extensive support network of citizens loyal to the patriots' cause.

Traditionally, the Marine Corps has been touted as the service that does the most with the least—more bang for the buck. In its history, the Marine Corps has often had to eke out a Spartan existence with meager resources. Like Francis Marion's brigade, the expeditionary forces of the Marine Corps are limited to operational necessities. Tomorrow's challenge for the Marine Corps will be to continue to improve the logistical flow for its forces during expeditionary operations. The concept of just-in-time logistics from both land and sea-based stocks has emerged as the goal for future operations. Based on current business models and incorporating the latest technology, its goal is to reduce the logistical burden of operating forces yet providing them with required logistics when and where needed. While it is a lofty concept, it still needs to be tested in the cauldron of combat, or future Marines may find themselves

standing around like Marion's men, while the battle rages, waiting for someone to go down so they can "borrow" their ammunition.

### ***Force Protection***

Every precaution must be taken to conserve a forces' fighting potential so that it can be applied at the decisive time and place. This is accomplished through properly planning and executing force protection. These actions imply more than base defense or self-protection procedures. Force protection means that we must plan to frustrate the enemy's attempts to locate and strike our troops, equipment, capabilities, and facilities.<sup>80</sup> The terrorist attack against Khobar towers in Saudi Arabia and the more recent terrorist attack against the USS Cole in the port of Aden, Yemen, put force protection issues squarely in the national spotlight. General Marion was particularly careful to husband his most precious resource. It was no part of Marion's practice to expose his men unnecessarily. He had too few men to risk the loss of any precious lives, where this was to be avoided.<sup>81</sup> The Marine Corps faces the same challenge in an emerging era of asymmetric attacks. This challenge is partially solved by maintaining sea-based expeditionary forces. Sea basing reduces the need for large land bases which are exposed to more asymmetric threats.

Many of Francis Marion's force protection measures were derived from lessons learned in action against his opponents. One such example occurred when he was moving to attack a force of Tories at the Black Mingo Creek:<sup>82</sup>

For twelve miles they rode through the velvet blackness of the night, hoping to surprise the enemy. Shortly before midnight they were slipping across the boggy

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<sup>80</sup> MCDP 1-2, 88.

<sup>81</sup> Simms, 124.

<sup>82</sup> Black Mingo Creek is predominantly located in present day Williamsburg County, South Carolina. See map page vi.



causeway leading to Willtown Bridge, about a mile above Dollard's house. The bridge was old, with loose flooring. The horses' hooves, striking the wavering planks, rattled like musketry through the still night air. A sentinel in Ball's camp fired an alarm.<sup>83</sup>

This happenstance at Black Mingo taught General Marion a valuable lesson. Henceforth, when there was no ford available and he was forced to cross a bridge at night, he had his men cover the wooden planks with their blankets.

Force protection was a watchword for General Marion. When he retreated to his main base camp on Snow's Island,<sup>84</sup> he was careful to ensure that all boats in the vicinity were taken to the island or destroyed. His center of gravity—his small militia—was too scarce a resource to whittle away through negligent disregard for their safety. He protected his men like his own sons. His scouts were comparable to the Marine Corps' present use of human exploitation teams. They roamed among the local population and gathered information vital to operations. General Marion's situational awareness was greatly enhanced by their intelligence, which was reflected in the fact that he was rarely caught unawares.

Operational security, a system of world wide alert conditions, and mission oriented protective posture are various ways the military services effect force protection. With the increase of asymmetrical threats and the continuing requirement for global engagement, the military needs to review procedures and determine if additional force protection measures are required. Like General Marion, the Marine Corps needs to jealously guard the lives of its most precious asset.

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<sup>83</sup> Rankin, 84,85,87.



## Chapter 4

### Conclusions

*In war the moral [morale] is to the material as three to one.*

**Napoleon I<sup>85</sup>**

General Marion inspired his men to fight by appealing to their shared commitment to win freedom from British tyranny. He fiercely believed in the cause of freedom and his sincerity motivated his men to follow him. As noted previously, his victories even converted many Loyalists to his cause. He was unable to pay his men for their selfless sacrifice, but he provided the leadership foundation that led to their long-suffering victory.

#### ***Swamp Fox: The Consummate Leader***

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<sup>84</sup> Snow's Island is located at the juncture of Lynches River and Peedee River, bordering present day Marion County. See map on page vi.

Francis Marion was an extremely just man and expected the same from his troops. He treated all persons with equal regard and respected the rights of civilians. He expected his men to treat the local populace with fairness. Marion was a devoted follower of the golden rule. He also pragmatically realized that mistreatment of the local populace would kindle stubborn opposition to his operations.

General Marion was a quiet and reserved leader who predominantly led through his personal example. Mao Zedong wrote that an officer should have great powers of endurance so that in spite of any hardship he sets an example for his men and is a model to them. Officers should live under the same conditions as their men, for that is the only way in which they can gain from their men the admiration and confidence so vital in war. There must be equality of existence in accepting the hardships and dangers of war.<sup>86</sup> In the parlance of modern times, “he walked the walk,” which is what effective leadership is all about. Marion not only led by example, but he led from the front. He fearlessly exposed himself to the same hazards that threatened the lives of his men. He always positioned himself with the section that was serving as his *main effort*. This position inspired his men to fight more determinedly and enabled him to better control the actions of his force.

Francis Marion’s demonstrated his compassion to his own men through his acceptance of their shortcomings. He rejected the “zero defects mentality.” On one occasion he sent Colonel Horry with a patrol to reconnoiter a Loyalist position. They stopped en route at the tavern of a known Loyalist. While Colonel Horry was questioning the Loyalist, the Loyalist’s wife led the other partisans to a shed and offered them some apple brandy. Later on, Colonel Horry noticed their state of intoxication, which forced him to abandon the mission and return to camp. Upon

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<sup>85</sup> Colonel Robert D. Heintz Jr., USMC (Retired), *Dictionary of Military and Naval Quotations* (Annapolis, Maryland: United States Naval Institute, 1966), 2d printing, 1967, 196.

hearing the story, General Marion chuckled and responded with, “Well you did right to retreat. But pray keep a careful eye on the apple water next time.”<sup>87</sup> General Marion’s compassion for all persons helped dampen the inflamed passions produced by the war that pitted neighbor against neighbor. The mark of a great leader is in how he treats the “little man.” In this respect, Francis Marion set a high standard for all military officers to aspire to.

Morale is an intangible force that leaders need to constantly monitor. A dispirited force may lose the contest by merely showing up. A combat organization with a high state of morale can overcome insurmountable odds to defeat their enemies. General Marion constantly monitored the pulse of his brigade to gauge their morale. There were times when he completely suspended his operations against the British and Loyalists to allow his men to tend to the needs of their families. He understood their need to secure peace of mind by assuring the welfare of their loved ones. General Marion realized that good morale is a combat multiplier and that poor morale can lead to the untimely destruction of one’s force.

General Marion routinely bolstered the morale of his men by recognizing and rewarding their acts of bravery in public. He publicly acknowledged the actions of a quick-thinking young boy named Gwinn, just fourteen years old, who had saved the life of Colonel Horry by shooting a Loyalist, Captain Lewis, before he could shoot Colonel Horry. In front of the entire militia, Marion praised the boy and presented him with the dead Captain’s horse, sword, and pistol.<sup>88</sup>

### ***Final Thoughts***

General Marion embodied the common sense approach to warfare. Marion was victorious through his skillful application of the art and science of war. He patiently pursued a

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<sup>86</sup> FMFRP 12-18, 85,86,91.

<sup>87</sup> Bass, 106.

strategy of erosion with maneuver tactics that struck the enemy *system* at its vulnerable points. He focused exclusively on the enemy, instead of terrain objectives. He possessed a maneuverist mindset, always maneuvering his highly mobile force into an advantageous position from which to attack his enemies. Marion knew when to attack and when to retreat to the swamps in the face of a superior force. He leveraged his combat power by pitting his strengths against his enemies' weaknesses.

Marion's intuitive grasp and integration of the six warfighting functions generated a synergy in his force that overcame their shortcomings. He wisely considered each applicable function in the development of his plans. General Marion demonstrated and fostered in his subordinates a creativity that enabled them to adapt to unique circumstances and overcome complex problems. He served as a great asset to his superior, General Greene, by providing him with vital intelligence that was critical to the Southern Army's operational plans. The combination of their conventional and guerilla tactics wore down the material and personnel resources of the British and extinguished their will to fight.

General Marion's leadership style was a model for all to follow. He was disciplined in his personal life and set a high standard for others. He led his men by example, sharing in their every hardship. He demonstrated a compassion for everyone, even including his enemies. He gave equal respect to the weak and the strong. He nurtured the morale of his troops by tending to their needs and publicly recognizing their valorous deeds.

In the way he conducted war, General Marion epitomized the essence of current Marine Corps warfighting concepts. He thought about waging war in the same manner that contemporary Marine Corps officers are taught to think about waging war. Officers in the Marine Corps and General Marion share an enduring mindset that seeks to exploit enemy

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<sup>88</sup> Bass, 91.

weaknesses with friendly strengths; a way of thinking that treats the enemy system as a whole and seeks to shatter the cohesion of that system. General Marion practiced maneuver warfare in its purest form in the Revolutionary War. Today's Marine officers think with like mind. Marine officers seek first to know their enemy and his capabilities, and then plan for ways to attack his critical vulnerabilities with our center of gravity, or strength. This way of thinking remains valid across the entire spectrum of conflict, most recently validated in the Gulf War. General Marion would fit right in with today's Marine Corps. While new technologies and tactics have changed the character of warfare over the past two centuries, the fundamental nature of war has remained the same. General Marion's way of thinking about waging war is as valid today as it was during the Revolutionary War. General Marion clearly demonstrated that the concepts of maneuver warfare that form the basis of the Marine Corps' current warfighting doctrine are timeless. He validated them in the crucible of combat during the Revolutionary War.

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